

Song.

SCOLLARD

1909.



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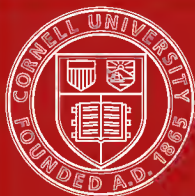
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Song for the ter-centenary of Lake Champ



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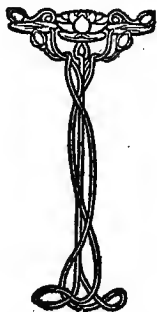
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SONG

FOR THE
TER-CENTENARY
OF
LAKE CHAMPLAIN

CLINTON SCOLLARD



SONG
*For the Ter-Centenary
of Lake Champlain*



SONG

FOR THE
TER-CENTENARY
OF
LAKE CHAMPLAIN
[JULY, 1909]

CLINTON SCOLLARD



CLINTON, N. Y.
GEORGE WILLIAM BROWNING
1909

SONG

For the Ter-Centenary of Lake Champlain



Midsummer! — and the world a full-blown flower,
This wide new world as virgin as its sod;
As wondrous seemed it that unfolding hour
As did the blossoms upon Aaron's rod!

That distant hour when first his falcon eyes
Gazed on this far out-rolling inland main,—
A flawless jewel under flawless skies,—
The knightly-hearted, valorous De Champlain.

No man of pomp, no silken courtier he,
No selfish grasper after Glory's star,
But one who wore undimmed the *fleur de lis*
Like his brave patron, Henry of Navarre!

Bred where Biscayan gales fling up the brine,
His look was level as a couchèd lance,
A valiant son of that intrepid line
Which gave fair lustre to the fame of France.

Roland and Bayard! — he was kin to these;
Swerved he no more than magnet from the pole
As forth he sailed upon the uncharted seas
With dreams of high adventure in his soul.

What foes he faced, what dangers dread he dared,—
Patient in peace, in war unwavering!
Unmoved he toiled, un murmuring he fared,
Like saintly Louis, the belovèd king.

Since then the Great Recorder of the Days
Thousands has scrolled upon his golden book,
Yet still a sheet of shimmering chrysoprase
The great lake spreads for whomso'er may look.

Behind the peaks that panoply the west
Still burn the sunsets like a mighty forge;
Still, with its voice of wandering unrest,
The swift Ausable rushes through its gorge.

Slope capping slope the awakening east along,
Vermont's broad ranges show their emerald dye;
And still, their meadows opulent with song
And glad with grain, the Hero Islands lie.

Across the water, as it breaks or broods,
In twilight purple, or in dawning gold,
Majestic from their airy altitudes
Mansfield and White Face signal as of old.

For howsoe'er man's genius bares or drapes,
Or cleaves or curbs by frowning height or shore,
Nature's sequestered elemental shapes
Preserve their primal grandeur evermore!

Grandeur and beauty! — here the twain combine,
Clothing the landscape with a varied veil;
And while before our eyes their splendors shine
Let the grave Muse of History breathe her tale!

Sea of the Iroquois! This was the path
Of those swart braves whose story casts a spell,
Who cut a swath of ruin and of wrath
Where'er in stealth their vengeful footsteps fell.

As wise as wary they! Yon shadowy cove
Once caught the glimmer of their council-flames;
And yonder, in that dim primeval grove,
They lurked to gain their sanguinary aims.

Then came Champlain and gallant Frontenac,
As daring as the keen conquistador,
And ever, where they voyaged, upon their track
Trailed, like a banner, the black smoke of war.

England and France! the vision will not pale;—
The lilied oriflamme, the double cross;
“Saint George!” and “Saint Denis!”—adown the gale
Surge upon surge the cries of conflict toss.

Ticonderoga felt the bloody brunt,
And grizzly cannon roared their deafening psalm,
When Abercrombie flung his fearless front
Upon the bristling bastions of Montcalm.

Another thrilling scene that fortress knew
When, ere the Maytime morning's earliest glow,
Bold Ethan Allen and his fearless few
Seized its embattled walls without a blow.

Still can we hear him;—in the gray light see
The firm-set features of his mountain boys;
“Up with your firelocks, you who'll follow me!”
And every soldier held his gun at poise.

Here Arnold strove,—(alas, the later hour
That stained a patriot name aforetime pure!)
Whelmed, yet undaunted, by the foeman's power
Beneath thy coppiced headlands, green Valcour!

With triumph vision, on exultant feet,
Here passed Burgoyne and his imposing train
To that grim day of desperate defeat
On Saratoga's memorable plain.

And here McDonough, prince of sailors he,
Resting his cause with the Almighty Will,
Hewed a red path to fame and victory
While from the shrouds a game-cock clarioned shrill.

Ah, pageant of the past! the trump, the fife,
The reeling shock of arms, to-day are banned;
Down closing vistas fade the stress and strife;
Now concord reigns, fair Gateway of the Land!

Three hundred years! How wide a space of time,
Yet we may cross it on the Bridge of Dream,
And very real, though none the less sublime,
Transcendent figures such as Shakespere seem!

The great are not remote. Their staturs loom,
Although they lie in moss-encrusted graves;
So view we him who, with the year at bloom,
Here led to battle his Algonquin braves.

Stanch De Champlain! he of the questing soul
And the impetuous heart! — ah, who shall say
If he beheld not back the lustrums roll
With revelations of our broader day?

For his we know was the unleashed surmise,
The lofty impulse, the inspiring thought,
Yet must we doubt if his presaging eyes
Divined the wonders that mankind has wrought.

His fragile shallop — 'tis a steam-spced barque!

His forest torch — 'tis an electric globe!

A touch, and lo, an emanating spark

As surely fatal as was Nessus' robe!

Speech flies through space as though on spirit wings;

We dive beneath the sea; we cleave the air;

Beyond the portal of what unseen things

May not tomorrow's new explorers fare!

And yet the old — the dauntless De Champlains!—

Let us be mindful of the debt we owe!

A splendid ichor coursed along their veins;

They quailed nor faltered whatsoe'er the blow!

Meagre their tools, and starveling were their aids,

Yet mark the marvel of their fruitful deeds!—

On verdured banks, in fertile-bosomed glades,

We reap the harvest where they sowed the seeds.

Then hail them, heroes of an elder hour!

Death's mandate only bade their struggles cease;
Still be their memory as a fadeless flower

As march the centuries toward the Bourne of Peace!



